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A Bold Move in the Game of Life

By Rock LaManna

In business, sometimes the chessboard we've been playing on isn't big enough anymore. We need something else to bring excitement and feel fulfilled. We need the courage to make a bold move.

For the past few years, I have been preparing for a transition in my business.

After 50 years in the graphic arts industry as owner, executive, and advisor, I am ready to shift my focus to my passion. I want to help organizations perform better and solve problems through the effective use of directors and advisors.

Beginning in 2024, I will transition from my role as CEO of LaManna Consulting Group to serving in an advisory capacity as an independent board director.

In addition to the directorships I've already accepted, I'll seek board positions where advice and direction are needed related to succession planning, CEO selection and progression, business growth, and the urgent issues of our day, such as sustainability, social responsibility, and governance.

In preparing for this transition, I've spent a lot of time thinking about how I best serve and how to maximize my strengths.

I am blessed to work already with several heart-centered organizations committed to helping others. One of these is my own non-profit, designed to help people with disabilities improve their lives through access to education and mobility.



Recently, I was invited to serve on the board of directors of an educational institution and a service agency in Africa.

I've joined the National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD), the most trusted national organization for board directors.

In addition to 50 years of boots-on-the-ground leadership and being a recognized industry expert, I bring the connections and experience of being an alumnus of the Owner/President Management (OPM) program at Harvard Business School.

It's rare to find entrepreneurs on major boards, and I believe my perspective will be useful in the boardroom and with today's CEOs.

Now more than ever, boards need honesty and frankness, connections to people and information, deep experience, and a willingness to ask tough questions.

“I'm ready to serve in a way that impacts the world and makes a difference in the lives of others.”

In the quiet moments of contemplation and prayer, this is what I feel called to do.

If you read my articles regularly, you know I believe business owners should sit down and face the future while they have options.

When I began this process, I started with: “Should I sell my business?” and “Should I run my business until I die?”

Neither option seemed quite right.

I thought about the word “retirement” and what it means. I love to work, so retiring in the classic sense did not suit me.

Selling to an outside investor or competitor was not the perfect option. So much of what I do as an advisor is based on the quintessential “Rock LaManna approach.” My work reflects my personality and unique background, which would be hard for a new owner to replicate.

I explored the idea of passing my business to the next generation. However, my three children and their spouses are well-situated in their careers and lives. For that, I am very proud.

A pivot – not retirement – made sense for the next stage of my career.

Going forward, business owners who need valuations, due diligence preparation, business strategy, and marketing advisory services will be referred to trusted providers. Other services I have traditionally offered will be handled or referred on a case-by-case basis. My day-to-day work will be board-facing to ensure I am living up to my purpose, promises, and obligations – and to establish myself firmly in my new role.

For the readers of this column, I will continue to be an active reader of this magazine, but I will not be writing this column. I have thoroughly enjoyed bringing you the Bottom Line and The Deal Flow Guy columns over the years, and I hope you have benefitted from my perspective.

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My longtime friend and memoirist, Greg Mischio, and his team at Winbound have provided support and years of business expertise.

Special thanks to Gabe Hernandez of Florida Graphics Alliance and colleague Doug Wick of Positioning Systems for their friendship.

And, I send my appreciation to the best business attorney who has protected and provided significant legal and business advice – and most of all believed in me and the firm's purpose in helping to pursue and achieve win-win transactions.

I have learned and grown alongside my brothers and sisters, extended family, close friends, and, of course, my children for their decisions and growth.

On the business side, I have been blessed to have clients I enjoy and who learn from me as I do them. Clients who become friends – what could be better?

Finally, to the legendary Carlo LaManna, my father and coach, and my steadfast and wise mother, now departed – I say thank you for your guidance, legacy, and love.

If I may leave you with lessons from my career, here are a few:

- Invest in and care for your people. Whether it is your business or your family, people make all the difference.
- Preparation and planning solve many business problems that avoidance and procrastination cannot. Start your planning early, and keep your eye on your goals.
- Integrity matters in all areas of life and business.
- Always remember those who helped you along the road.
- Love and faith will carry you forward.

To you all, I wish you the best.

It's never too late to find and fulfill your purpose in life. Just take the first step.

With nearly five decades in the printing, graphics, and packaging industries, Rock LaManna has served as an owner, founder, entrepreneur, consultant, and a mergers and acquisitions (M&A) deal maker. Rock turned these experiences into priceless advice for business owners, investors, and directors. His new focus sees him empower corporate and non-profit boards of directors. Rock advises board members on CEO selection/retention, accountability, successful M&A transactions, succession planning, and strategic growth. His expertise also includes emerging and urgent issues, including innovation, sustainability, social responsibility, and governance. Rock is a proud member of the National Association of Corporate Directors, the most trusted national organization for board directors. He is an alumnus of Metropolitan State University and Harvard Business School's Owner/President Management program. Visit RockLaManna.com for updates on Rock's life and work.